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ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended for individuals involved in writing and reviewing college disability statements, summarizes the results of a Further Education Development Agency evaluation of the disability statements of 432 further education (FE) colleges throughout England. Chapter 1 examines the extent to which the individual FE colleges' disability statements meet the criteria specified in 1996 regulations governing FE colleges' disability statements. Included throughout Chapter 1 are numerous examples of good practice in 423 (98%) of the policy statements that indicate the institutions' commitment to respond flexibly to all students, including those with disabilities. The examples illustrate policy statements by focusing on the following items: overall policy, admissions arrangements, education facilities and support, other support, examination arrangements, physical access, and complaints and appeals procedures. Chapter 2 evaluates the disability statements in terms of their style, format, and accessibility. Special attention is paid to the following aspects of the statements: title; length and size; presentation (word processed versus printed); and availability in alternate forms. Fifty-one examples/figures are included. Appended are the following: text of "The Education (Disability Statements for Further Education Institutions) Regulations 1996: Guidance for Colleges in the FE Sector in England"; framework for evaluation; and interview schedules. (MN)

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FE college disability statements an evaluation

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FE college disability statements: an evaluation

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and Liz Maudslay

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Evaluation Director, FEDA

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Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) addresses discrimination in:

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Sales and letting of premises.

Education provided in an establishment funded by (among others) the funding councils (FEFC or FEFCW) or local authorities is exempt from the Act. However, colleges and authorities in England and Wales must make public what support is available for disabled students through the publication of disability statements.

Disability statements must be reviewed and updated by October every year and colleges are now onto their third round of statements. The FEFC has commissioned FEDA, working in partnership with Skill (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities), to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the 1998/99 statements from colleges in England. The following publication is the result of this evaluation.

Methodology

FEDA evaluated 432 English FE college disability statements. Each statement was examined according to the criteria specified by DfEE in *The education (disability statements for further education institutions) regulations 1996. Guidance for colleges in the FE sector in England* (see Appendix 1). In addition, the statements were examined to assess the accessibility of their style and format. The individual analyses of disability statements were then entered in to a database to provide quantitative data.

Because the data analysis gave no insight into how far college disability statements were reaching potential students or what students themselves felt about them, FEDA also organised focus groups in two colleges. This was recognisably only a small sample, but it did allow the researchers to gain first-hand information from students. Each student focus group consisted of a cross-section of students with a variety of disabilities and learning difficulties. Staff, including the college coordinator for this area of work, were also interviewed in a separate group. The interview schedules are provided in Appendix 3.

Who this publication is for

This publication is of relevance to anyone who is involved with the writing and reviewing of college disability statements. This could include inclusive learning coordinators, coordinators for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, staff responsible for facilities, information services, admissions, examinations and estates and also lecturers, support workers and disabled students. In addition, the document may be of interest to other providers of education and training for example, local education authorities (LEAs), training and enterprise councils (TECs) and training providers.

The data analysis is available in a database, which will enable FEFC regional officers to search by region and may be useful for providing information to inform the fulfilment of the duty to secure adequate and sufficient provision. It may also be used to contribute to decisions about out-of-sector placements.

What it covers

This publication summarises the main findings of the evaluation. Chapter 1 looks at the content of the statements evaluated and examines the extent to which they adhere to guidance issued by the DfEE and the Welsh Office (see Appendix 1). Chapter 2 evaluates the disability statements in terms of style, format and accessibility. In both instances, examples of good practice are given for each category analysed. Examples used to illustrate the text are drawn from a wide range of statements. The intention is to show a variety of interesting approaches. The examples included in this publication have been scanned in from the original statements and illustrate the range of styles, formats and illustrations used. They are not necessarily reproduced in full size. Inclusion in this document does not imply that any individual statement is a model of good practice.

In terms of content and style, the evaluation reveals an improving picture of college disability statements. However, information obtained from the student focus groups revealed that there are problems with appropriate dissemination of disability statements. This is concerning as the major purpose of the statement, in the words of the DfEE guidance, is:

> *... to provide helpful information to prospective students on the facilities for education available at the college, together with ancillary facilities and support arrangements without which students with disabilities would not be able to benefit from the educational provision on offer.*

In response to this, the document specifically addresses issues of dissemination and suggests practical ways in which colleges might improve their dissemination.

1 Evaluation of the content of the disability statements

Details of the framework used to evaluate disability statements are listed in Appendix 2. The areas covered are all taken from the DfEE's *Guidance for colleges in the FE sector in England (1996)*. This chapter summarises the findings of the evaluation of the content of the disability statements. It is divided into eight sections:

- Overall policy
- Admissions arrangements
- Education facilities and support
- Other support
- Examination arrangements
- Physical access
- Complaints and appeals procedures
- Other areas.

Issues concerning style, format and accessibility of the statements will be discussed in the next chapter.

Each section in this chapter will:

- Give information on the results of the survey
- Identify areas not well covered
- Give suggestions as to how these areas might be improved in future statements
- Give examples of good practice
- Make recommendations.

This is an evaluation of the disability statements and not of provision. What is important is that the prospective student receives a clear message about what facilities and support are available in any one institution.

Overall policy

The issues looked at in this section were:

- Whether there is a responsibility to respond flexibly to the individual needs of prospective students
- Whether there are clear and explicit details about how to contact a named member of staff.

It was encouraging to see that 423 out of 432 disability statements (98%) indicated the institution's commitment to respond flexibly to all students including those with disabilities. In some statements this takes the form of a general welcoming introduction (see Example 1). Others start with a specific message from the college principal, thus enforcing a sense that this positive response is extended throughout the institution (see Examples 2 and 3).

One statement also names, at the end, two governors who have a particular interest in disability. Other statements indicate their willingness to support students at the beginning of the statement and follow this up by a finishing comment that reinforces the positive message. Colchester Institute provides a good example of this (see Example 4).

However, 67 statements representing 15% of the total did not give explicit details on how prospective students might make their first contact with the college. It is essential that anyone wanting further information about college provision for disabled students should be given clear indicators about how to initiate this first response and to whom it should be addressed. It is far easier for prospective students to make an initial phone call if they have a named person who is clearly stated as being the contact for a particular area of work (see Example 5).

At times of high staff turnover, colleges may be apprehensive about naming individual members of staff, but there are ways of overcoming this. For example, one college included a pull-out insert with the names of relevant staff members, which could easily be updated without affecting the rest of the statement. Some statements also included photographs of relevant staff.

Many statements list the staff concerned directly with provision for disabled students, but some include a wider range of contacts. Solihull College includes in the list of contacts the examination's officer and the site managers, who can give further information on physical access and related premises matters. East Birmingham College (now City College Birmingham) also lists the cafeteria, admissions and registrations officers and the health and safety officer.

Recommendations for improvement

- Students need to have explicit details on how to make their first contact with the college, so statements need to include the name of the appropriate person and where and how they may be contacted.

You might also wish to consider:

- Having an insert with names that can be regularly updated
- Including photos of relevant staff.

Admissions arrangements

Admissions arrangements covered:

- Specific admission arrangements including assessment
- Availability of support during admissions
- Pre-entry guidance prior to enrolment
- Sources of advice at application stage
- Details of what the application process will entail
- Any special arrangements for early assessment for students who may proceed to a specialist college.

Over 95% of statements mentioned the availability of specific admission arrangements for disabled students and over 94% mentioned the availability of support during the admissions process. However, 64 statements (15%) gave no details of pre-entry guidance and assistance before enrolment.

An example of good practice in this area is Basingstoke College of Technology, whose disability statement provides a comprehensive list of the sources of advice for students (see Example 6).

Moving on to the application process itself, 88 statements (20%) did not mention useful sources of advice at application stage and, significantly, over half of the statements, 286 (66%) gave no details of what the application process would entail. This is a requirement in the DfEE guidance and, although it may be difficult to spell out in precise detail, it is important for prospective students to have some idea of what happens during the application process. An example of good practice in both these areas is seen in Milton Keynes College's disability statement, which describes the application process for a range of different learning programmes (see Example 7).

A further example is to be found in South Thames College's and King George V College's disability statements (see Examples 8 and 9).

Equally concerning is the fact that 399 (92%) of statements did not give details about early assessment procedures for students who may be placed in a specialist residential college. It is very likely that colleges are in fact arranging these early assessments but it is important that students and parents are clear about the college's procedures. This is increasingly important in the light of recent FEFC guidelines stating that recommendations for student placements outside the FE sector need to be forwarded before the end of December (FEFC Circular 99/40, 1999).

In addition, FEDA and Skill have undertaken research to offer guidance on the college's role in the process of placing students at specialist residential colleges.

Recommendations for improvement

At the application and admission stage, students need:

- Details of the pre-entry guidance available
- Sources of advice about how to apply
- Details of what the application process will entail
- Details about early assessment procedures for students who may be placed in specialist residential colleges.

Education facilities and support

This includes details of:

- Curriculum support available
- Equipment and technical support
- Specialist staff expertise
- Other support; for example, interpreter/communicator, reader, large-print notes, classroom assistant, student support worker.

Of the statements evaluated, 383 (89%) give details of curriculum support, 399 (92%) give details of equipment and technical support, and 369 (85%) mention specialist staff expertise. Many statements give clear and comprehensive descriptions of the wide range of support offered by their college (see Example 10).

Other statements give a clear indication, not only of what equipment is available but of what it does (see Examples 11 and 12).

Fewer statements refer to classroom assistants – 203 (47%) – although a further 69 (16%) mention support workers. However, these statistics may be affected by the fact that the two job titles can be used interchangeably in different institutions.

Recommendation for improvement

- Statements need to state clearly the function of any support staff and the roles that they can fulfil.

Example 1. York College of Further and Higher Education

YORK COLLEGE OF FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION DISABILITY STATEMENT 1998/9

The college aims to enable people to access, participate and progress within and from a learning programme. We are working towards providing an inclusive learning environment with a curriculum that ensures that the learning needs of all individuals are met; including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Example 2. Barnsley College

Barnsley College
Old Mill Lane Site
Church Street
Barnsley
S70 2AX

Dear Student

Barnsley College is committed to policies and practice based on the principles of equal opportunities. This is why we adopt a social model of disability or learning difficulty not a medical one. It means that we see disability mainly resulting from behaviours or barriers which prevent people with impairments from taking up the learning opportunities we offer, and not the result of medical conditions. We do not seek to deny the existence of medical conditions (for example, diabetes, asthma, arthritis, mental illness) physical/sensory conditions (for example, visual, hearing or mobility impairment) or learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia). Our approach is to recognise and plan with you how to overcome the obstacles and barriers you may face, so that you can benefit fully from our learning programmes, facilities and services.

This statement explains how we seek to take positive action to create this inclusive learning environment where there are 'Opportunities for All'. We also recognise, despite the considerable progress we have made in reducing social and environmental barriers, that we need to progress further.

I hope you will find our statement informative and valuable in planning for your future, and that we can assist you in realising your potential.

David Eade

David Eade
Chief Executive

Example 3. Milton Keynes College

Introduction

From Sally Dicketts, The Principal

"The Milton Keynes College Disability Statement sets out the way in which we support learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. This support is part of our development of an inclusive College.

Our aim is to create opportunities for you to achieve your personal, educational and employment goals. To achieve this we must provide a welcoming, effective learning environment which supports your and other learners' specific requirements.

Our learning vision centres on improving our understanding of how people learn so we can then help you become a more effective learner. Our staff are trained to help you and are committed to the mission of the College which will ensure you are provided with opportunities to identify your strengths, develop your skills, recognise and value your individuality."

Example 4. Colchester Institute

..... AND DON'T FORGET

We want you to enjoy your time at the Institute and to be successful in whatever course you have decided to study. We can only help you if we know you need special help and assistance, so come and talk to us and find out just how much we can do to help you benefit as much as possible from being at the Institute.

Example 5. Harlow College

Who can I contact about Learning Support?

When you want advice and guidance there are key contacts and key people around the college. Whatever your difficulty or disability you can contact the **Learning Support Service** on:

Telephone 01279 868225

Fax 01279 868260

Minicom will be available soon

BT Type Talk Service

Email aoconnell@harlow-college.ac.uk

Please ask for:

Paul Marsh Primary Programmes and Learning Support Manager

Angela O'Connell Learning Support Administrator

Paul or Angela will be pleased to help with your enquiry. They can also be found in **Room KG03 which is located on the ground floor of Building K**.

The Learning Support Office is open:

Monday - Thursday	8.45am - 5.15pm
Friday	8.45am - 4.45pm

Please call in and talk to us informally

Example 6. Basingstoke College of Technology

Admission Arrangements

i. **Advice**

Advice for students with disabilities can be obtained through:

- transition reviews in Years 9/10 for students with statements;
- the Special Needs Careers Adviser for students with sensory, physical or learning disabilities;
- College presentations for Year 10/11 pupils in all local schools;
- 'links provision' for students from local schools;
- the College's Advice and Guidance Service for adults with disabilities.

ii. **Assessment**

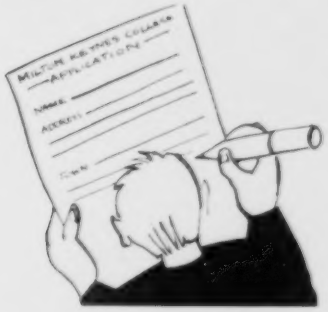
All students with a disability are invited to the College to discuss individual needs and to establish how the College can support them during their programme of study. The Additional Needs Support Tutor (ANST) assists students in making an application to the College, and in establishing their individual physical, sensory, learning and behavioural needs.

Pre-enrolment assessment of students may result in the need to place them in the independent sector. This assessment is carried out by the ANST and College Registrar.

iii. **Enrolment**

For full-time students, the assessment processes above will identify individual needs. For part-time students, the enrolment form asks students to indicate whether they have a disability. For 1998-99 entry the College plans to review the use of the form and the actions to accommodate students' needs that arise from it.

What must I do to become a student at Milton Keynes College?



Full - Time Programmes

- Complete an Application Form, indicating that you may need support because of a disability / learning difficulty.
- Send it to Threshold Services.
- You will be contacted to discuss and agree your support needs.

Part - Time Programmes

- Apply directly to the Curriculum Area or through the Threshold Services' one-stop-shop.
- Tell us at interview if you have a support requirement.
- The Disability or Dyslexia Managers will contact you to discuss and agree your support needs.

Supported Learning Workshops

- Apply through Threshold Services, or by filling in an Application Form, or at one of the Open Days, which takes place around March.
- Your additional support needs will be assessed. One third of the places will be reserved, until 31 May, for new students. After this date any unfilled places will be released to other applicants. A copy of the full 'Selection and Admission Policies and Procedures' is available from Ruth Davies.

Vocational Opportunity Programme

- Complete an Application Form, indicating that you may need support because of a disability / learning difficulty.
- Send it to Threshold Services.
- Your support needs will be assessed at your interview.

Admissions

If you want to talk in general about what courses and support might be available at South Thames College, contact the Learning Support Unit or one of the Student Service Centres and we will arrange a time for you. Whoever sees you will ensure that you get good advice and that you are able to apply to whichever course or courses you choose. If you cannot use public transport we can arrange transport to and from your interview and, in some cases, will come to see you at home or elsewhere to discuss what might be available to you at South Thames.

If you have enough information about the courses on offer and you know what you want to do then fill out an application form and return it. An interview will be arranged for you with someone who knows about the course you have applied for.

On the application form there is a section that asks you whether you feel you may be disabled in the college. If you tick one of the boxes in this section you will be contacted at or after your interview by someone from the Learning Support Unit who will discuss with you any support you may need.

You may bring anyone you like with you to any interviews at the college to help or support you. In particular we often have parents, friends, careers officers, teachers or social workers attending with potential students to help and support.

If you are already attending South Thames on one of our link programmes with local schools and units please ask your tutor if they can arrange an interview for you. You may also find that a member of staff from the college attends your school review so that we can give you information and advice there.

The information in this statement also applies to Wandsworth Adult College. If you are an adult with a learning difficulty looking for a part time course you should contact Iris Hudson at the Gatton Road site of Wandsworth Adult College ***(0181 918 7599)***.

What are the Admissions arrangements?

We welcome applications from students with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities (LDD) and aim to make the transition from school to college as smooth as possible.

The College has considerable expertise in supporting students with a range of physical, sensory and learning difficulties. These include the visually and hearing impaired, students with Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Epilepsy, Dyspraxia and Dyslexia, but the list is only a sample.

Every student has individual needs and you are welcome to telephone the College to talk to the Learning Support Co-ordinator about this before you fill in the application form.

Initial enquiries and requests for information should be made to the College on 01704 530601 and we aim to respond within 2 working days. A **5 minute video** detailing our support services is available to applicants and an information sheet on Learning Support arrangements can be obtained from Admissions. Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities are encouraged to make arrangements for a **preparatory visit** to the College by telephoning Reception on 01704 530601 and to attend **Open Evenings** with parents, carers or independently.

You can find details of the Admissions procedure in the Applications Pack. On the College application form we ask students with LDD to tick the box indicating that support is required. Such applications are referred to the Learning Support Co-ordinator who then arranges a **pre entry interview** so that you can tell us about your needs. We can then work out what support you require and avoid any delay at the beginning of the course. We encourage students to be open about their needs and to supply as much information as possible. You are welcome to bring a friend, carer or parent to your interview with the Learning Support Co-ordinator. Please let us know if you require special interview arrangements.

You can also contact the Learning Support Co-ordinator in the 2 weeks prior to the beginning of the College year to sort out any last minute concerns.

What special facilities and support does the College offer?

a) STAFF

We have staff with a range of skills. Currently we are able to offer help with

- Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)
- Basic Skills - Literacy.Numeracy
- Learning Difficulties
- Challenging Behaviour
- Severe Learning Difficulties
- Makaton Communication

The college also has well established links with the Sensory Impairment Teams and Educational Psychology Service.

They will give advice and guidance on Visual Impairment and Hearing Impairment.
We also have access to specialist agencies
eg. PACT. (Placing Assessment Counselling Team)
SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities)
VISS (Visual Interpreting and Communication Service in Shropshire
RNID (Royal National Institute for the Deaf)
RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind)

b) TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

We have a wide range of equipment accessible in several Learning Resource Centres. Wheelchair access is available in the main Learning Resource Centre via a lift to the Computing area and into the main Library Facility.

The Web site is at:
www.tcat.ac.uk.

We have the following available to all students in the main Learning Resource Centre:

> 70 networked computers with MS Works, Microsoft Office, Corel Draw, Pagemaker, Powerpoint

Internet access
Scanning equipment

> Software for	Food programmes	Key Skills
	Accounts	Careers Guidance
	Record of Achievements	Speech Activated Software
	Languages - basic - advanced	

Wide range of CD Roms covering all subject areas.

★ Lap-top computers are available for students on a pre-bookable basis through the Bridge Open Learning Centre.

Specialised computers with modified keyboards

Two enlarged keyboards - one arranged alphabetically

Concept keyboards

Two large screen computer monitors

Cassette recorders

★ Personal Dictaphones available for students on a pre-bookable basis from The Bridge Open Learning Centre.

★ Priority is given to students with specific support needs contact Marian Barton initially.

Example 11. Harlow College

What resources and equipment do you have to help me?

We will discuss your needs and try to meet them from our wide range of resources which include:

- **Braille Embosser** - Embosses text in Braille instead of printing on paper.
- **Computers** - for word processing, spreadsheets, desk top publishing, finding information. As well as machines in the IT Learning Centre (see also below), you will find computers in learning centres across the college and in the Library. From September 1998 the **College Ednet** will serve programmes college wide.
- **CCTVs** - Closed Circuit TV for enlarging text onto a screen. One of these machines is currently located in the Library.
- **Dictaphones**
- **JAWS** - Screen reader systems for blind students.
- **Large Screen Computer Monitors**
- **LUNA** - Software for enlarging text on screen.
- **Multi-sync Monitor** - Suitable for people with Photo-epilepsy.
- **Portable Hearing Loop** - To enable access to lectures for students with hearing impairment.
- **Right-handed Maltron keyboard**
- **Tape Recorders**

The Learning Resources team, located next to the Library, are able to produce adapted materials for people with specific learning needs, e.g. putting written information on to tape. For further information contact: *Mark Harris* (01279 868059)

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND SUPPORT

Staff expertise

The college has a range of staff with relevant background, experience and/or qualifications who are able to provide support in the following areas:

- severe learning difficulties
- moderate learning difficulties
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- dyslexia
- physical and medical difficulties.

Although we do not currently have staff with particular expertise in supporting students with hearing or visual impairments, such students have successfully attended our courses with the help of appropriate external agencies.

Curriculum Support

The level of support required by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is based on an assessment of individual needs. The support offered can be one or a combination of the following:

- one-to-one support sessions
- supported learning programmes

- individual support (communicators, note-takers, carers)
- group support
- specialist assessment
- advice/support to course tutors
- literacy, numeracy and language support.

Equipment and technological support

The college has a limited resource bank of specialist technology and equipment which currently includes:

- a Minicom facility
- voice box facilities on a computer in the learning resources centre and in T13
- specialist computer software (eg to produce Makaton symbols)
- concept keyboards
- scanner facilities
- large print copies.

If you need any specialist equipment to undertake your chosen course, please contact us before enrolling on a course so that we can let you know if we can meet your needs.

Other support

Other support mentioned in the DfEE guidelines and listed in this section includes:

- Welfare and advice services
- Links with external organisations
- Careers guidance
- Personal care support
- Medical support
- Catering facilities for students with special dietary requirements.

Welfare and advice services, links with external organisations and careers guidance

A very high proportion of statements refer to welfare and advice services (371; 86%), links with external organisations (392; 91%) and links with careers service (327; 76%).

Personal care support

A smaller proportion (only 201; 47%) mention that they provide personal care support. Yet only nine specifically state that they do not provide it. It may be that colleges are in fact providing this but have not mentioned it in their disability statements. Skill is planning to produce an information sheet on providing personal care support in colleges. An example of a clear list of general support services is provided by City College Manchester (see Example 13).

Medical support

Only 48% of statements refer to medical support. It is likely that over the years many colleges have lost direct access to trained medical staff. However, through the additional support mechanism of the FEFC funding methodology, colleges can claim for medical support (e.g. physiotherapy), if it can be demonstrated that this support is directly necessary for the student to achieve their primary learning goal. Three examples of statements that present information in a way which enables the student to be completely clear of what a college can and cannot offer are Handsworth College (see Example 14), Tile Hill College (see Example 15) and King George V College (see Example 16).

Colchester Institute (see Example 17) provides detailed information on what medical and first aid facilities are available, where they are provided, and whether they are accessible.

Catering facilities for students with special dietary requirements

One interesting fact in this section is that over a half of all statements, 258 (60%), make no mention of special catering facilities. With the cafeteria system offered by most colleges it is likely that they are in fact catering for a variety of special dietary needs. Many students, whether or not they are disabled, may have an ongoing health problem which may require a special diet. Inclusion of catering facilities for students with special dietary requirements in the statement might be as simple as shown in Example 18.

Recommendations for improvement

- Specify the extent to which you can provide personal care and medical support.
- Specify the dietary needs for which the college can cater.

Example 13. City College Manchester

Other College services

- Counselling service on each site.
- The Information, Admissions and Guidance office can help with welfare rights advice and information about trust funds, grants, benefits and money matters.
- Specialist guidance about progression to Higher Education as a disabled student. Book an appointment with your site based guidance officer.
- Mentor service (pick up a leaflet).
- The Childcare staff on each site welcome disabled children. Some staff know basic sign language. Special toys and equipment are available for disabled children.

Example 14. Handsworth College

Medical Support

Handsworth College does not have its own medical team, however we have a large and growing number of trained first aiders in the College, at all Centres.

We will arrange medical help for you if required and where necessary, we will arrange to take you to the nearest hospital, or to your doctor, or to your own home.

Example 15. Tile Hill College

PERSONAL CARE / MEDICAL SUPPORT

When students enrol at Tile Hill College, we can make arrangements to ensure that during their time with us, their personal care needs can be appropriately met. Student Support Assistants are available to provide support and the **College Nurse, Marjorie Hayes,** can help with any medical or health-related needs.

It is important that you let us know if you have any particular day-to-day care / medical needs, so that we can make sure that suitable arrangements can be made for you. You can discuss, in confidence, any such needs with Liz Varnish or the College Nurse (see Making Contact), or, if you prefer, let us know by completing the relevant section on your enrolment form.

Example 16. King George V College

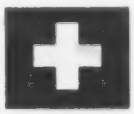
Can I get medical support?

The College has a team of 11 who hold the **First Aid at Work** qualification and we are close to Southport and Formby District General Hospital for more serious emergencies. There is a well equipped **Medical Room** with an adjustable height bed and we can arrange the safe storage of medical supplies such as blood products. We have a care assistant on site full-time.

MEDICAL AND FIRST AID FACILITIES

At Colchester our First Aid room is on the ground floor in C block (near the Gym). Qualified first aiders attend to minor ailments but if more serious treatment is required you will be sent to hospital, transport will be arranged. At Clacton the Medical Room is on the first floor of Towers Block and there are lifts available. However if you have a wide wheelchair, access is not possible, but the qualified nurse can attend to you in private in a ground floor room.

On the enrolment card you will be asked to indicate whether you have a medical condition. If you do, or if you take medicines regularly or if you have an allergy then please visit the First Aid Room and inform the staff. The information you give will be treated confidentially and only divulged to other medical or paramedical personnel. This is so that if you are taken ill, your previous medical condition is known and the right treatment can be given to you as soon as possible.



Example 18. Handsworth College

Where to Eat ? . . .

Our Stable Diner, at the Soho Road Centre, is located on the ground floor and is accessible to wheelchair users. Although most of the seating is fixed there are several seats which are moveable to allow wheelchair users to eat with their friends. The Stable Diner is a staff and student canteen and provides hot and cold meals, including vegetarian and healthy eating choices, throughout the day. If you have specific dietary requirements, simply talk to the Manager! A similar service is offered at 'Doc's Diner' at Duddeston and at the Lozells Centre.

The 'Practice Restaurant' (Training Restaurant) is accessible via lift and chair lift and offers something a little different, but unless pre-ordered 'munchers' must eat whatever is on the menu that day.

For evening students a snack bar is open until 7.45 pm and this is located next to the Stable Diner.

Example 19. Weymouth College

Examination Arrangements

Students themselves are responsible for registering for examinations. Your tutors will explain the procedure. Details are in the Student Handbook, Library, Reception and Department Office.

The Examinations Officer June Barnes and her staff act on behalf of students in contacting examination boards and requesting special or individual consideration. This is the type of support which can be arranged according to personal requirements:

* Extra time during the examination
* Alternative rooming arrangements for students who use wheelchairs
* Person to read/write on behalf of the candidate in the examination
* Individual room with a separate invigilator
* Enlarged print papers

It is important that we know as early as possible your requirements so that necessary arrangements can be made by the examinations officer, SLDD Coordinator and Effective Learning Coordinator. Examination Boards themselves set limits to the support and allowances which we can make.

Time allowance:

Additional time, according to need, such as dyslexia, is allowed in most subjects. It is the responsibility of the College's Examinations Officer to check with external examining boards as to whether they will grant extra time. Once it has been established that they will allow extra time, evidence (such as copies of medical reports) will be attached to the candidate's examination scripts as proof that s/he is suffering from that said disability/illness.

Usually 25% of the total examination time meets most needs but it is at the discretion of the Examinations Officer to recommend the amount of additional time. An allowance of more than 25% may be permitted if necessary.

In certain circumstances, supervised breaks or rest periods can be given either in or outside the examination room. The duration of the break will not be deducted from the time allowed for the examination component.

Means of access to questions

Modifications to the visual presentation of papers, normally for visually impaired candidates -

enlarged / large print papers whereby the paper is enlarged on photocopies from A4 to A3
Braille versions of papers (not all examination boards offer this service)

Use of technological devices, such as enhanced screens.

Reading of questions to candidates if access to paper is not possible through other means, except where reading is an assessment objective.

Signing of questions for hearing-impaired candidates in exceptional circumstances.

Use of taped recordings of questions papers may be permitted but only in exceptional circumstances if no other means can be found of supporting the candidate with permission from the relevant board.

Means of presenting responses

Use of mechanical or technological aids, such as word processors and typewriters for candidates who are unable to write, have difficulty in writing or need support during the examination.

Use of amanuensis. Candidates are eligible to use amanuenses if they suffer from long-term or temporary disabilities.

Examination arrangements

The overwhelming majority of statements indicate that support can be given to disabled students during the examination process. A concise example is Weymouth College's statement (see Example 19). Another comprehensive list is in the Stourbridge statement (see Example 20).

Physical access

This part of the evaluation examined ways in which disability statements described the physical accessibility of various parts of the college building. This included the accessibility of:

- Libraries
- Learning support workshops
- Other academic facilities
- Catering facilities
- Sports and leisure facilities.

It covered information given on:

- Ramps, hoists and lifts
- Car parking arrangements
- Accessible toilet facilities.

It also asked whether there were any site plans or maps displayed with the statement and whether there was a willingness to relocate classes in the interests of a disabled student. Statements vary considerably in how they deal with this issue. A worryingly high proportion of statements do not mention access in sufficient detail which means that a potential student will be unclear as to whether there is access to other parts of the college, for example learning centre or canteen. Of those responding, 236 (55%) fail to mention whether or not the library is accessible, 80 (19%) state it is fully accessible, 106 (25%) state that it is partially accessible and 10 (2%) not at all accessible (see Figure 1). 204 (47%) and 198 (46%) do not mention the accessibility of learning support workshops or other academic facilities (see Figures 2–8).

Figure 1. Physical access: libraries

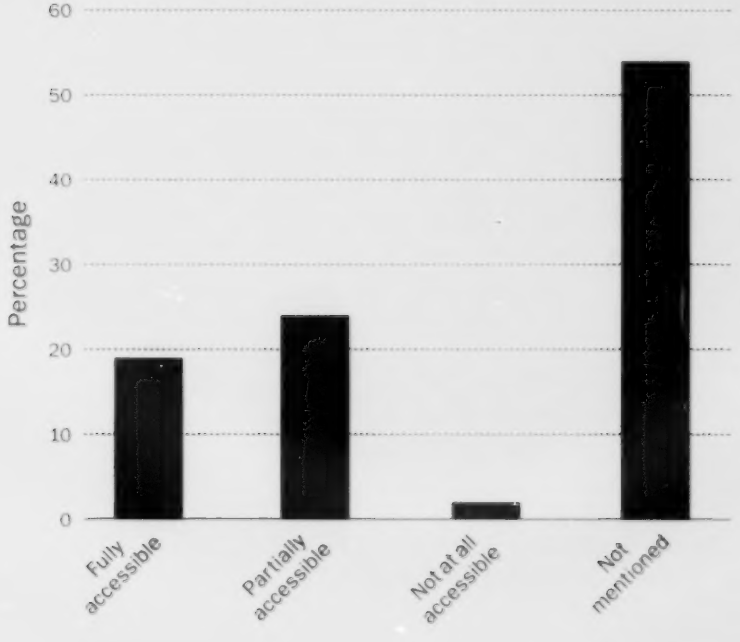


Figure 2. Physical access: learning support workshops

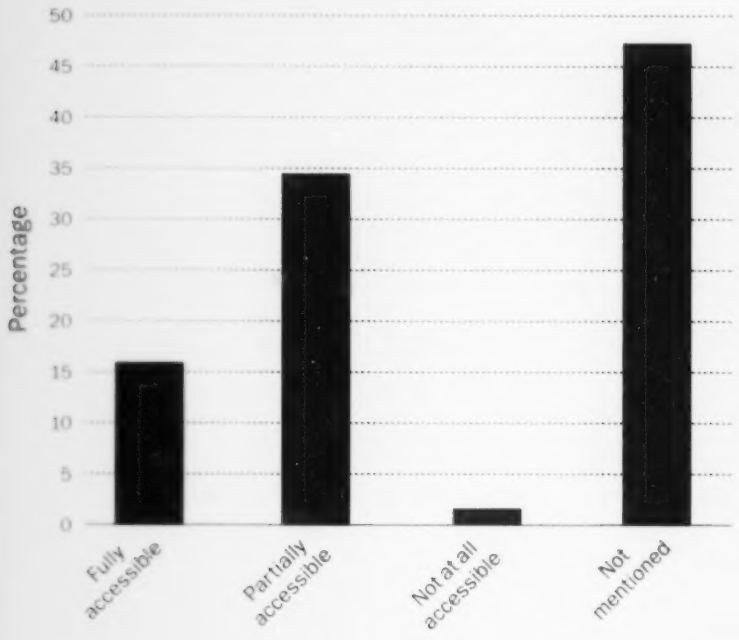


Figure 3. Physical access: other academic facilities

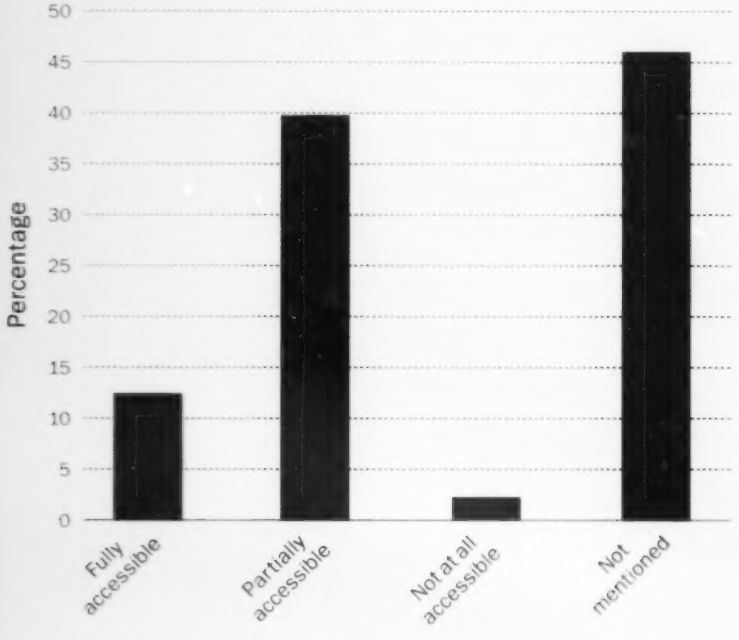


Figure 4. Physical access: catering facilities

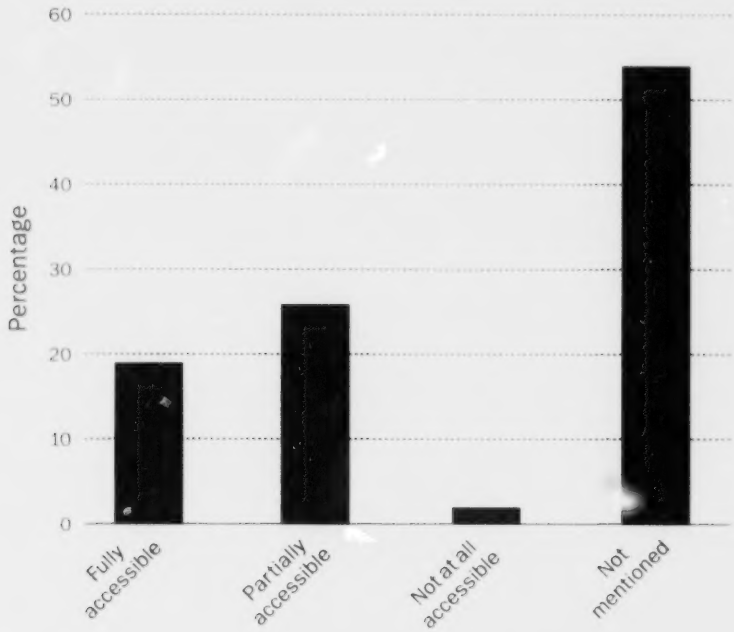


Figure 5. Physical access: sports and leisure facilities

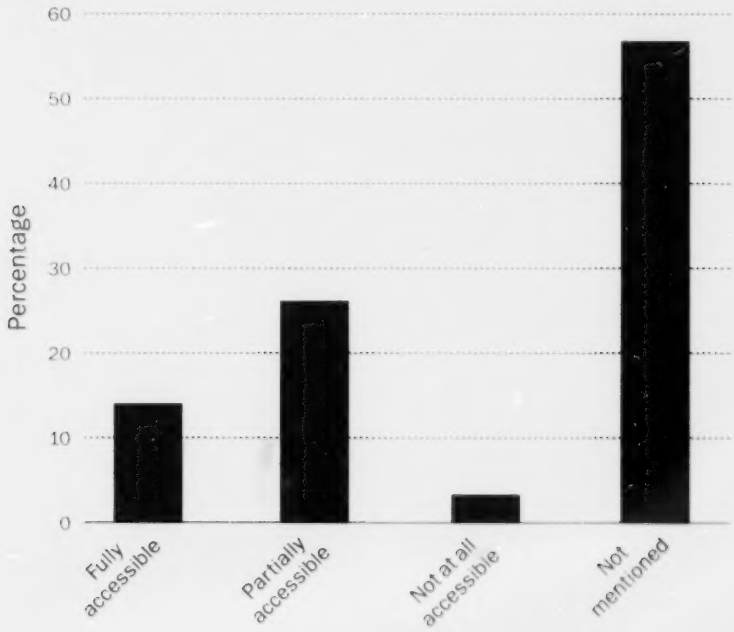


Figure 6. Physical access: ramps, hoists and lifts

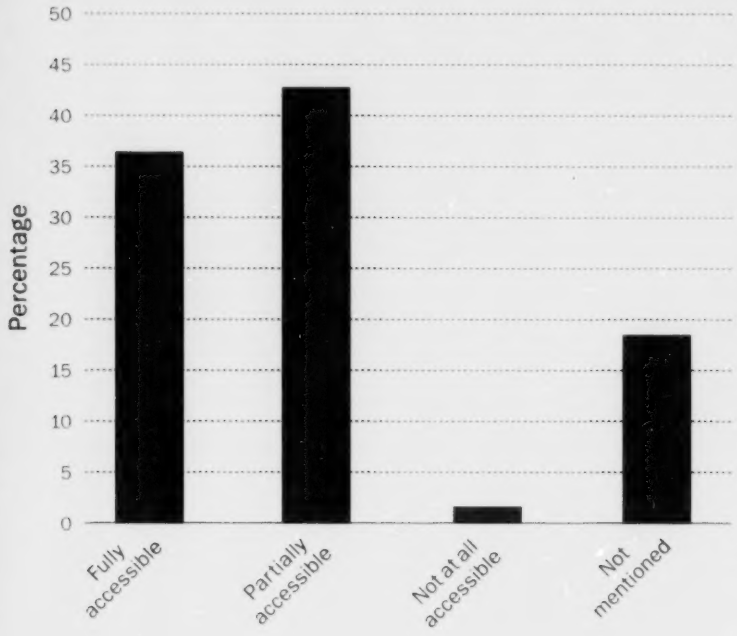


Figure 7. Physical access: car parking arrangements

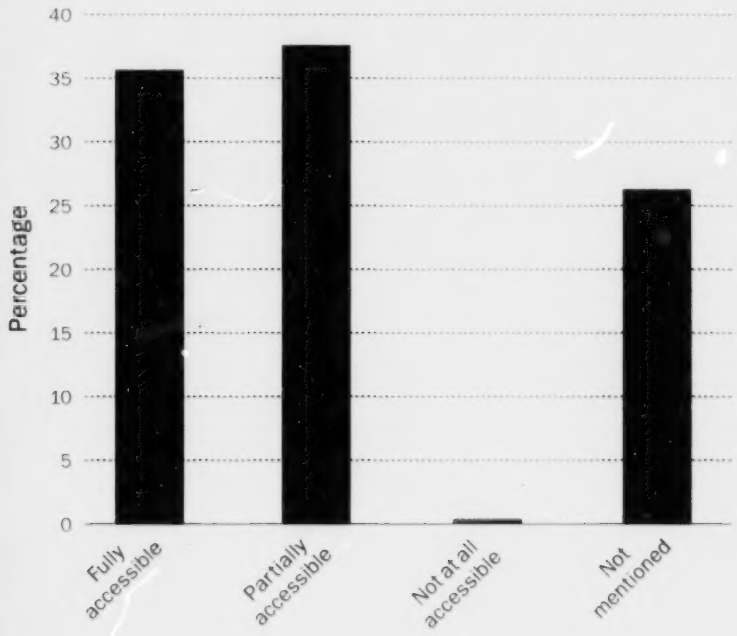
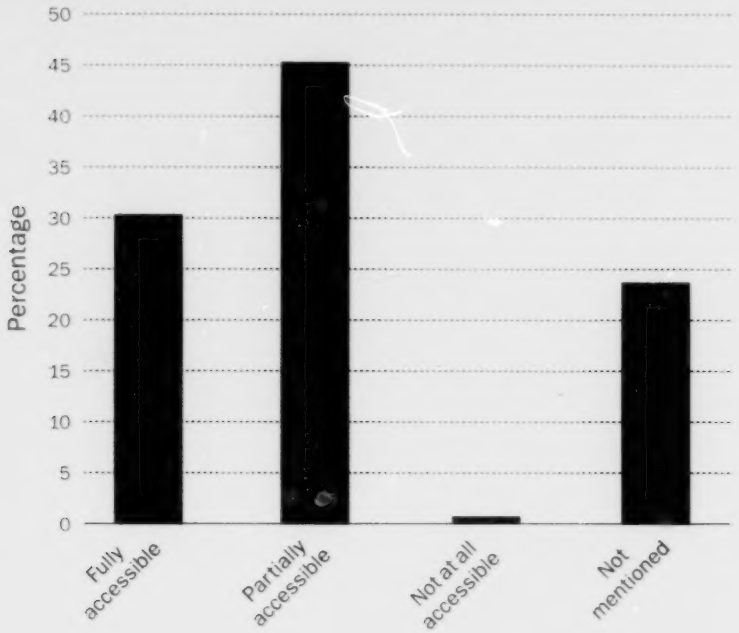


Figure 8. Physical access: toilet facilities



Very few statements mention access outside or between buildings, yet steep slopes and unmade paths can present formidable barriers to some people.

Other statements may mention all the aspects of access mentioned above, but the information is sometimes displayed in a way that is difficult to understand. There are, however, some very good examples of ways of displaying this material which give a simple and clear picture of accessibility (see Examples 21 and 22). Hopwood Hall and Northampton College use access symbols in their statements (see Examples 23 and 24).

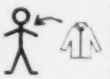
It can be as helpful to prospective students to indicate what is not accessible. Solihull College gives a clear indication of what is inaccessible (see Example 25). It also indicates that accessibility varies in outreach centres and that building work is scheduled at the main site for the forthcoming session.

Recommendations for improvement

- Ensure that you provide sufficient detail on access to all parts of the college, including what is not accessible, and access outside or between buildings.
- Where the college is willing to relocate classes to accessible locations, you need to ensure that this is stated.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"What physical access and facilities are available ?"

	Car Parking car	Toilets toilet	Ramped Entrance	Level Entrance	Lifts elevator	Changing Facility 
Eastwood Building	✔	Level 3 ✔ Radar Key	✔		✔	
Clifton Building	✔	Level 3 ✔ Radar Key		✔	✔	
Howard Building	✔	LB H ✔ Radar Key		✔	✔	✔

Key **LB** = Lower Basement
H = Hoist

- Radar keys are available from:

The Information Desk	Eastwood Reception	Extension 2777
Gwen Hunter	Room E305	Extension 2888
Study Centre	Room H152	Extension 2796
Sixth Form College School Office	Room H108	Extension 2713
Clifton School Office	Room C115	Extension 3047
Caretakers	Room C102	Extension 2731

- Car Parking spaces are available when the College is open. See map for locations.

Bispham Campus

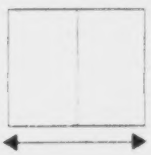
Building	Access	Comments	Other Access
Cleveleys Building Business, Catering, Management Leisure and Tourism	Yes	Ramps and Lifts	Adapted toilet on 3rd floor
- College Shop	Yes	Ramp	
- College Bookshop	Yes	located in Entrance Hall to Cleveleys Building	
Garstang Building College Administration	Yes Yes	Automatic entry door 1st floors accessed by the lift in Thornton Building 2nd floor inaccessible	1 adapted toilet on ground floor 1 adapted toilet behind the Learning Resource Centre on 1st floor
- Learning Resource Centre	Yes	Located on 1st floor of Garstang Building	
Thornton Building GCSE + A levels College Access Centre	Yes	Ramp and Lift	Both toilets in Garstang Building are available to users in Thornton Building
Elswick Building Engineering Technology Business Studies Secretarial Access Courses	Yes	Ramp and Lift	There is an accessible toilet
Wyre Building Engineering Workshop	Yes	Ramps (single storey building)	
Heating and Ventilation and Plumbing Workshop	Yes	Single storey building	

ACCESS & FACILITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Educational support workers are available to support students on both sites. Portable hearing loop systems are available for use on both sites.

These facilities are available on both campuses.

CAR PARKING



AUTO DOORS

TOILETS

MINICOM

RAMP ACCESS

HEARING LOOPS

TALKING LIFTS with Tactile Controls

Access To College Facilities

CENTRE	CAR PARK	WHEELCHAIR ACCESS	LIFT	LOOP	DIS. TOILET	INFORMATION & GUIDANCE	TELEPHONE NUMBERS
Booth Lane	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Central Admissions Unit (CAU)	01604 734228
Duston Upper School	✔	partial	✖	✖	✖	Dawn Weston	01604 751818
Duston Community Centre	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Duston Swimming Pool	✔	✔	hoist	✖	✖		
Millway Middle School	✔	✔	✖	✖	✖		
Education Shop	✖	✔	N/A	✖	✖	Lin Marlow	01604 24427
Kingsthorpe Upper School	✔	✔	✖	✖	✖	Pat Lawrence	01604 717479
All Saints Middle School	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Drayton Walk	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✔		
Kingsthorpe C.E Lower School	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Northampton Middle School	✔	✔	✖	✖	✔		
Wardington Court	✔	✔	N/A	✔	✔	Helen Percival Smith	
Lings Upper School	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖	Angie Routledge	01604 402175
Bellinge Community House	✖	✖	N/A	✖	✖		
Lings Forum	✔	✔	✔	✖	✔		
Lodge Farm Community Centre	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Thorplands Lower School	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✔		
Mereway Upper School	✔	✔	✖	✖	✖	Ann Dudley	01604 702701
Barry Road Pool	✖	✖	N/A	✖	✖		
Briar Hill Lower School	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Camp Hill Community Centre	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Camp Hill Lower School	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		
Delapre Golf Complex	✔	✖	✖	✖	✖		
Delapre Middle School	✔	✖	✖	✖	✖		
St James Community Centre	✔	✔	N/A	✖	✖		

Example 25. Solihull College

What is not accessible?

The following areas are not accessible to wheelchair users at present:

- some non-specialist classrooms in part of the main building at the Centre for Sixth Form Studies
- the upper floors of the Art block and the Language Exchange (Qualitair) are not accessible by wheelchair.

If you are intending to join a programme at one of our outreach centres, you are advised to check the accessibility before you start, since access varies considerably from centre to centre. During the college year 1998/99 there may be disruption to access to various parts of the building at Blossomfield Campus due to building work. If this causes you a problem, please contact the Site Manager.

Example 26. Telford College of Arts and Technology

Future Plans

As part of the College's ongoing strategic planning we are actively working with a wide range of local organisations. We endeavour to ensure that our 'services of the future' meet the needs of individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities within the local community

The College as part of its Estates Management has as a strategy to upgrade access to facilities and toilets.

What do I do if I am not happy with the College?

The College has an Appeals and Complaints Procedure. You may obtain a copy from Student Services.

Support is available to students with disabilities or learning difficulties who may need, for example, help putting their case forward, an advocate, or help with communication. Please contact Marion Barton in Student Services.

"The statement is saying that the college is very supportive of everyone"

Complaints and appeals procedures

This section covers an analysis of whether:

- There are any special arrangements in place to assist students with disabilities in accessing the appeals process
- There is a link with other documents which contain details of complaints procedures
- There are grounds on which the students may complain about the disability statement itself.

383 (89%) of colleges referred in their disability statement to other documents which contain details of the complaints procedure.

However, 169 (39%) made no mention of specific arrangements to assist disabled students in gaining access to the complaints procedure. An example of a clear description of how a disabled student can be assisted in making a complaint is provided by Telford College (see Example 26).

Oaklands College includes a statement which indicates its willingness to be responsive to those complaining. 'As a complaint is processed, we will seek to adapt our system in order to meet your personal needs.' Somerset College of Arts and Technology provides the name of the student advocate who can support and represent students wishing to complain.

North Lincolnshire College also provides a clear and concise description of how to complain (see Example 27).

296 (69%) of statements do not mention the grounds on which a complaint can be made against the disability statement. This is a DfEE requirement and so must be referred to in the statement. If support for FEFC-funded provision described in the disability statement is not available then students can complain.

Some 35% of statements however do include a general statement about the fact that it is possible to make a complaint about the disability statement (see Example 28).

Recommendations for improvement

You need to:

- Mention any specific arrangements to assist disabled students in gaining access to the complaints procedure
- Specify the grounds on which a complaint can be made against the disability statement.

Other areas

This section includes other areas mentioned in the DfEE guidance which do not fit neatly into any of the above headings. They are:

- Reference to other college documents
- Proposed developments
- The inclusion of all aspects of education including HE collaborative work
- Disclaimers.

Reference to other college documents

Over 90% of statements refer to other documents, for example, equal opportunities policy and learning support policy, yet only some state clearly where these can be obtained (see Examples 29 and 30).

Oaklands College (see Example 31) provides a helpful list of all the documents available from the helpline service.

Tower Hamlets College (see Example 32) provides a guide to college information in a table which gives the title of the document, describes what it contains and where it is available from.

Example 27. North Lincolnshire College

How to complain

The College has an established Complaints Procedure.

1. Complain verbally to a senior or middle manager at College.
2. Complain to the Customer Services Manager
3. After 5.00pm complain to the Duty Manager

Complain in writing using the Customer Complaints Form available from Reception.

To complain about the contents of this document or other aspects of the Disability Statement, complain directly to Barbra Plunkett.

Special arrangements can be made to ensure that students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities can access the complaints and appeals procedure. Sign language interpreters would be available and students would be encouraged to bring an advocate or friend.

Example 28. Basingstoke College of Technology

Complaints and Appeals Procedures

The College has three procedures:

- The College Complaints Procedure (for members of the public who are not studying at the College).
- The College Academic Appeals Procedure (for appeal against an assessment).
- The College's Student Complaints Procedure (for complaints on issues not related to assessment).

The Student Support Services Manager is responsible for supporting students with disabilities in accessing and proceeding with a complaint under these three procedures. The three procedures are available from the Student Support Services Office.

If a student is unhappy about any aspect of this disability statement, they should complain using the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Example 29. Bromley College of Further and Higher Education

College Policies

We believe that all young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have an entitlement to high quality further education and training. These students are provided for in college policies, which include:

- Equal Opportunities
- Assessment/Internal Verification
- Complaints
- Appeals
- Staff Development
- Health and Safety

These Policies are available in the Libraries at Rookery Lane and Old Town Hall sites and on request, can be made available on audio tape and Braille. Translation into other languages may be possible on request.

Example 30. Macclesfield College

Guide to College Information

Information	Describes....	Available from....
Full-time Prospectus	Full-time courses for entry in September	Learner Services
Learning & Leisure Booklet	Part-time courses in College and Continuing Education Centres throughout the District	Learner Services
Extra Help - Your Guide to Our Services	Services and facilities available for students who have additional needs/disabilities	Learner Services
Equal Opportunities Policy	The College's approach to equal opportunities	Learner Services
College Charter	The College's mission - its pledge to students, employers & the local community	Learner Services
Complaints Procedure	How to make a complaint about the College's Service & how the College will deal with this	College Reception Learner Services
Disability Statement (Employment)	Our responsibilities as an employer towards people with disabilities	College Reception
Disability Statement (Services)	College policy towards students with disabilities & how to locate services	Learner Services

Example 31. Oaklands College

Publications and leaflets available from our Helpline Service

Full time and part time prospectuses

Course leaflets

Student Charter and Student Handbook

Learning Support Service leaflet

Equal Opportunities Policy

Assessment Appeals Procedure

Financial Assistance

Complaints Procedure

Example 32. Tower Hamlets College

A GUIDE TO COLLEGE INFORMATION

INFORMATION	DESCRIBES...	AVAILABLE FROM ...
College Prospectus	Full time courses available for entry in September.	Advice Sessions Information Line College Receptions
Directions Guide	Full time, part time and short courses available at College for entry in September and throughout the year as indicated.	Advice Sessions Information Line College Receptions
Advice Line	General information about courses, Advice Session dates, Enrolment dates.	Phone - 0171 538 5888
Equal Opportunities	Outlines College policy on equality of opportunity in relation to gender, sex, race, ethnicity, disability.	Student Handbook Staff Handbook
Charter	Your rights as a student at Tower Hamlets College.	College Receptions
Complaints	Outlines College procedure and provides forms to fill in.	College Receptions
Disability Statement	Outlines provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.	College Receptions Advice Sessions Learning Support Unit
Student Services	Various booklets outlining functions of the student services - including Student Advisers, Counsellors and Youth Workers.	College Receptions From Tutors Through Student Union
Careers	Information about progressing to work and further studies.	David Grant - Careers Coordinator ext. 382
Student Handbook	Information including College services, disciplinary procedure, College policies etc.	Given to each full time student by their tutor.

Example 33. Strode College

FUTURE INTENTIONS

The College will, within available financial resources

- review current policies, procedures and practices in pursuit of the achievement of its commitment to equal opportunities for all
- investigate alternative formats for its marketing and publicity materials (including its Disability Statement)
- re-design the map/floor plan of the College sites, to indicate clearly parking spaces for the disabled, access points, toilets and lift(s)
- improve signs around the College
- conduct an internal/external audit on physical access
- provide ramped access to the Main Block and Almshouses
- consider special adaptations to main access doors and corridor doors, and the installation of lift access to first floor in Main Block and Science Block
- explore the possibility of providing additional support staff to meet identified needs
- invest in training and materials for staff (Disability Awareness, Screening, Welfare and other guidance, sign language, counselling)
- liaise with relevant external agencies and special schools to determine how the needs of students with disabilities can best be met

Example 34. Shirebrook College

PLANNED FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS ARE :

Lift access to be developed at Manor College. Development of the leisure complex is underway in conjunction with business partners, with access for people with disabilities.

Improved general facilities at the

Whaley Thornes CLOC

Shirebrook College

Develop facilities and equipment for students with hearing impairments.

Provide a programme of continuous staff development.

Example 35. Peterborough Regional College

Future Site Improvements

Footpaths

A dropped kerb has been provided on the footpath to the main staff car park via mobile 520, 535/6. Further dropped kerbs are planned to be put in this term.

Main Reception

It is acknowledged that the counter height should be lowered to assist wheelchair users and persons of small stature to converse with the receptionist. There are currently proposals to review and reform this area of the college.

Mats & Carpets

The college understands that mats are a simple means of providing a change in floor surface texture that is helpful to blind people. Currently there are mats at the entrance door areas, but improvements could be made by providing in the following areas:-

adjacent to the counter window at the main reception.
at the entrance to the Information Unit
at the entrance to Student Services
at the entrance to the Refectory
at all toilet entrances

Corridors

Fire Doors

There are still a number of half glazed doors that may cause problems for people in wheelchairs or who are of a short stature. Currently around 60% of fire doors are fully glaced. Push plates and handles are of a contrasting colour to the doors.

Room Doors

Some doors have Braille labels and during this academic year all door numbers are scheduled to be replaced with larger ones to assist people with poor vision.

Access To Upper Floors

A second lift is planned to be installed in the main building in September 1999. This will give access to wheelchair users to the first floor rooms 128-146 in the Alexandra 5th installment building which include the hairdressing and beauty salons, language centre, some visual and performing arts rooms and student toilets.

Toilets

Although there is an acknowledged need for a disabled toilet on the second floor adjacent to the computing suite, a suitable location has yet to be agreed as it will mean the loss of some existing teaching space.

Mobiles

All ramp surfaces have been improved with the introduction of a non-slip surface. A bell will be provided as a means of contacting nursery staff at the bottom of the ramp. The gate latch will be removed to the outside of the gate. The incline of the ramp is too steep. These improvements will be carried out this academic year.

Stairs

During the summer all stair edges have been highlighted.

Forward House

During this academic year both ground floor emergency exists will be ramped in order to make them accessible to wheelchair users without assistance.

Proposed developments

Just under one-quarter, 95 (22%) of statements mention proposed developments. It is understandable that this is a sensitive area as institutions may feel wary that they are committing themselves to plans which they may not be able to realise. However, there are some very positive examples of colleges which feel confident in stating that an awareness of the needs of disabled students will inform their future development plans (see Example 33). Shirebrook College lists a range of planned future improvements (see Example 34). Peterborough Regional College identifies detailed plans to improve the accessibility of college sites (see Example 35).

HE collaborative work

FE college disability statements apply only to educational provision which is funded by FEFC. When an institution does collaborative work e.g. with higher education and adult education, different support arrangements may apply. The statement needs to make this clear. Although an increasing number of FE colleges make HE provision, this is mentioned by only 49 (11%) of institutions. There should be a simple statement as to whether this is an aspect of the college's work and if so, what different arrangements may apply (see Example 36).

Disclaimers

It is intended that disability statements should provide an accurate description of the facilities and support disabled people can expect at college. Therefore, it is inappropriate to include disclaimers. It is usually possible to construct the statement to remove disclaimers. For example, 'The following equipment is available for loan, subject to availability', may be rewritten as 'There are six laptop computers available for loan'.

Disclaimers are mentioned by only 17 (4%) of statements. It is a welcome fact that so few colleges feel the need to be cautious about describing their support for disabled students.

Recommendations for improvement

You need to:

- Mention proposed developments wherever possible
- State clearly which areas of the college's work the disability statement applies to.

Example 36. Macclesfield College

> **Higher Education**
>
> Learner Services staff provide information, advice and guidance about Higher Education opportunities. Prospectuses for universities and other higher education institutions as well as other reference sources are available. Additional grants are available to students with disabilities in Higher Education.

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2 Style and accessibility of the disability statements

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first looks at those issues of style and accessibility which have been analysed in the evaluation of all the disability statements. The second part gives feedback from the targeted work carried out with a small sample of disabled students currently attending college.

The DfEE regulations are not prescriptive about the format of disability statements. Consequently they vary greatly in style, content and length. In this chapter we are not in any way attempting to suggest a prescribed format for a disability statement as we see that as a matter for an individual college. Our concern is that the statements should present information in a way that is clear and accessible to disabled students. We also wish to give colleagues an idea of the variety of ways in which the disability statement information can be presented.

Evaluation of the style of disability statements

Specific aspects analysed in the survey included:

- Title of the disability statement
- Length and size
- Presentation – i.e. word processed or printed
- Availability in alternative formats.

In addition the survey covered three areas which focused on the extent to which the disability statement is an accessible and student-friendly document:

- Accessibility of language – student-centred, neutral or policy-oriented
- Willingness to respond flexibly to the individual needs of prospective students (already mentioned in Chapter 1)
- Emphasis on student discussing needs on an individual basis.

Title of the disability statement

Approximately 361 (84%) of documents are titled *Disability statement*. Other titles include:

- *Able to learn: information for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities* (York College)
- *Support for students: the disability statement for Sandwell College*
- *Welcoming you: information about support in college for people with disabilities* (Blackpool and the Fylde College)
- *Colchester Institute and disability: a guide on how we can help disabled students to succeed*
- *Extra help: your guide to our services* (Macclesfield College)
- *Guide to support services* (East Birmingham College).

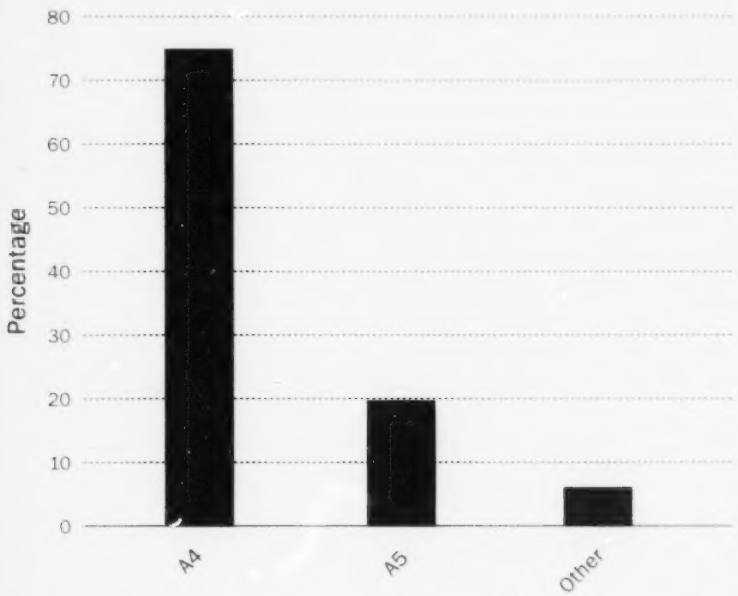
Colleges may prefer *Disability statement* but there is no obligation to use that title. An alternative title may be more informative to a prospective student. However, even if the document does have a different title it must still meet the requirements of the disability statement.

Length and size

The majority of statements, 322 (75%) are A4 documents. There is no right answer to the question of what length or size a disability statement should take (see Figure 9).

To some extent length will be determined by the amount of specific support which a particular institution offers. It is also important to remember that students may be receiving the disability statement along with a lot of other college information and so will be looking for a document which gives sufficient, relevant information as concisely and clearly as possible.

Figure 9. Size of disability statements



In terms of length, statements vary from one sheet of A4 to 50 pages, including other attached documents. 166 (38%) are between two and four pages long and 90% are 13 or fewer pages. The most common length is three pages. 64 (15%) are three pages long.

Presentation

71 (16%) of statements were professionally printed, in several instances with photographs, while the rest 361 (84%) were word-processed (Figure 10).

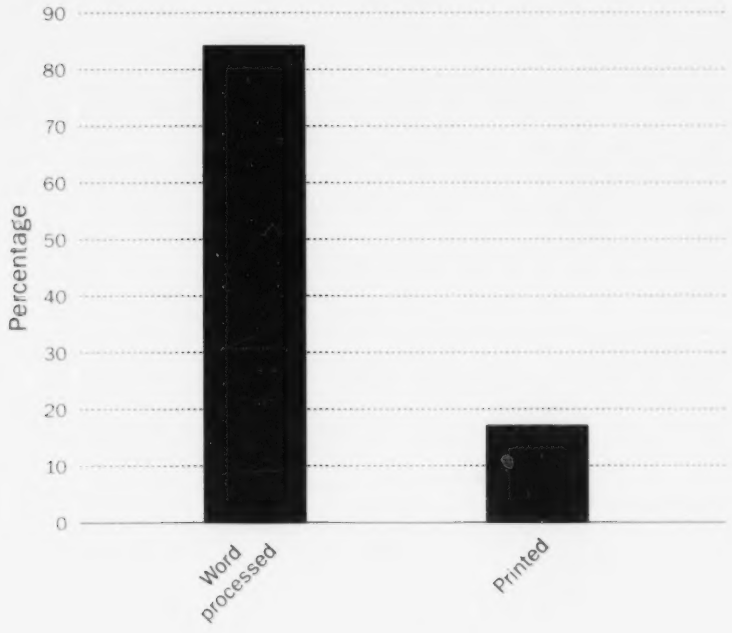
To a large extent this reflects the resources the institution chooses to allocate to such a document. Glossy presentation does not necessarily imply good content – in fact there can be a danger of a glossy format covering up inadequate information. However, a properly presented document which is packaged in the same way as other official college documentation, does help to suggest an institution which takes the issue of support for disabled students seriously.

Some colleges had innovative ways of presenting their information – for example a question and answer format. Several livened up their text with pictures

or cartoons although it is important to ensure that the illustrations are pertinent to the text. In their enthusiasm to illustrate the text, colleges can in fact detract from it by using symbols that do not relate to it.

With increasing emphasis on partnership and collaboration it is good to see a disability statement which reflects this. Milton Keynes has produced a joint statement in which the college and local authority statements are placed back to back in the same binding. Another college has produced a single document including both the disability statement and student charter.

Figure 10. Presentation of disability statements



Alternative formats

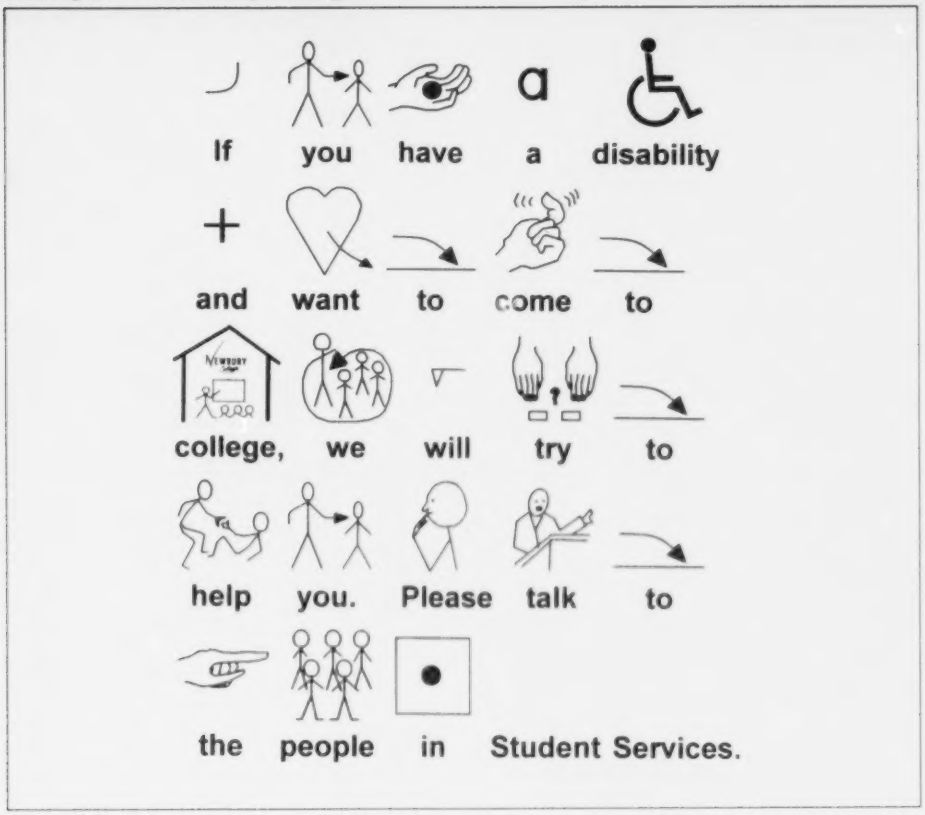
133 (31%) of all statements mentioned availability in alternative formats. In most cases these included large print, Braille and tape. There is an irony in the fact that in so many instances a statement specifically dealing with issues of support for disabled students fails to mention its own accessibility to students with particular disabilities. In a few cases a much shortened disability statement has been created for students with learning difficulties using Widgit, Makaton or other symbols. While this is to be welcomed it is important to ascertain that the symbols used in the statement are consistent with those used by students with learning difficulties in the local area.

For students at Newbury College, Widgit software is used (see Example 37). At Solihull College, students are familiar with Makaton symbols (see Example 38).

Accessibility of language

Language was defined as being 'friendly and student-centred', 'neutral' or 'policy-oriented'. Such a classification is to some extent dependent on the individual interpretation of the researcher. However, allowing for this, the evaluation found that 259 (60%) of the statements were written in friendly and student-centred language; 151 (35%) in language which could be described as neutral and only 22 (5%) in policy-oriented language (see Figure 11).

Example 37. Newbury College



Example 38. Solihull College

Visits

If you wish to visit the college before deciding whether to come here

and you would like to look round you can ask the Advice Centre to

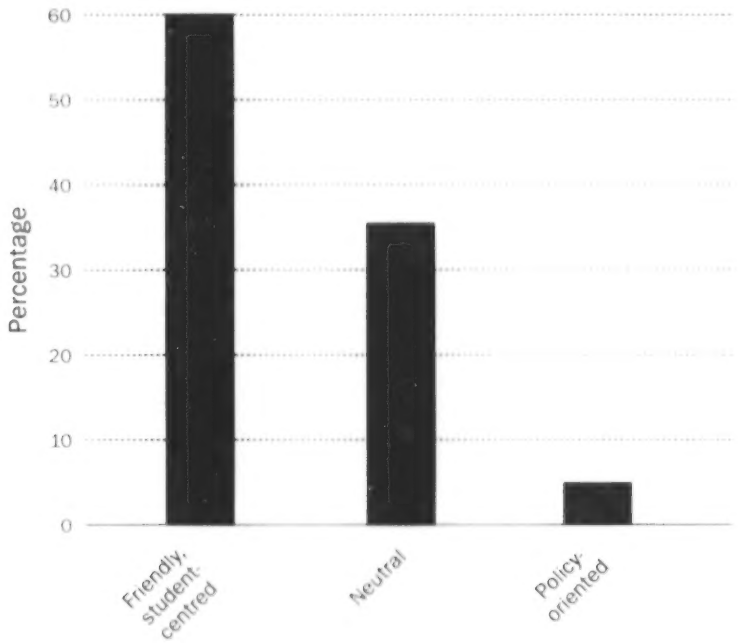
arrange this for you.

If you have any questions which you want to ask after reading this

booklet please telephone us. The number is 0121 678 7236

or 0121 678 7113.

Figure 11. Disability statements: accessibility of language



There are no similar evaluations of earlier disability statements against which to make direct comparisons but it is probable that these would have shown very different percentages. It seems that over the three years there has been a significant shift from seeing the disability statement merely as a policy document required by the FEFC as a condition of funding, to seeing it as a valuable document which can help to provide information and guidance for students.

Willingness to respond flexibly and emphasis on discussion of needs on an individual basis

As stated in Chapter 1 the majority (98%) of college statements indicated their willingness to respond flexibly to disabled students and these initial remarks do much to set the tone of the disability statement.

Results were slightly less positive in terms of 'emphasis placed that students should discuss their needs on an individual basis'. Slightly more than half (254; 59%) made some mention of this. It is very likely that more colleges than this do in fact discuss needs individually, but do not say so in the statement. It is worth remembering that this is precisely the kind of information which is valuable in giving confidence to a student who may be unsure of how to approach a college.

Two examples of an approach which gives prospective students a very positive sense of their needs being catered for individually comes at the beginning of Barnsley College's disability statement (see Example 39) and City College Norwich's disability statement (see Example 40).

Focus groups

Student focus groups

Students with a diverse range of disabilities and learning difficulties were interviewed in two colleges. Although the sample is small it provides a helpful indicator of how students' regard disability statements. The interview schedule is included as Appendix 3.

Students were asked if they had seen their own college's disability statement. It was revealing to find that few students remember having done so. There is clearly an issue about dissemination and we will be addressing this at the end of this section.

Example 39. Barnsley College

The First Step ...

If you have a disability and/or learning difficulty, our policy is:

- to arrange to discuss with you what support may be available should you start a learning programme at Barnsley College,
- to undertake to work with you and any other person you suggest to assess your needs and agree what type of additional support (if any) is appropriate.

If you decide to enrol, we will:

- endeavour to provide the best possible means of support for you by accessing, or helping you to access, support services and appropriate funding sources for additional support,
- review with you your support needs each term or at any stage you feel is necessary.

Example 40. City College Norwich

Policy

City College welcomes students with disabilities, learning difficulties, medical conditions and those recovering from mental health difficulties.

City College makes every effort to respond flexibly to meet individual needs. It recognises that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have the same rights of access to education and training in the College as all other people in the community. Procedures are therefore in place to identify individual students' needs and to aim to meet these needs. Full details are published in the College Equal Opportunities for Students policy and its Code of Practice, which are available from the Information Centre, Student Services and the Student Union.

We hope that you and your advisers will find the information in this booklet helpful.

Information requirements

The next question students were asked was: 'How did you receive information and what information would have been helpful?'

Students varied in the way they had received information:

- Via the careers adviser
- Via their school
- Via their parents.

Some students suggested that the information available in the disability statement should be made available in a far wider range of places; schoois, Citizens Advice Bureaux, libraries, Internet and advertising through TV were mentioned.

While a few felt that prior access to the statement would have been very useful many were adamant that the written word was not always the way in which they wanted to receive information. They acknowledged that they required as much information as possible but a proportion of them said they much preferred to receive this orally (comments such as 'even simple reading is difficult for me, I would much rather someone told me about it'). Other ways of receiving information such as shorter leaflets and video were mentioned. All students were however very keen that anyone in a position to advise them should have access to all the information in the statement and several of them recognised that the written statement could provide a useful source of reference to back up information given orally.

Format, style and presentation

As would be expected, individual students held very different views on the preferred format, style and presentation of disability statements. The differing views expressed are represented below and a summary of the main conclusions is drawn.

One point which was unanimous among all students interviewed was that they wanted the statement to be presented in clear and straightforward language.

One of the colleges used as a focus group had three versions of its statement:

- A full text, policy-oriented version covering all requirements
- A simplified version in large print
- A symbol version in Widget.

All of the students in this group preferred the simplified version except, interestingly, the two students with severe learning difficulties who, although they were unable to read it, stated a preference for the full version. Similarly the majority of students in this group liked illustrations, use of colour and pictures.

In the other group there was a strong sensitivity to the fact that presentation of the disability statement should not be different from other documents just because it was being produced for disabled students. In contrast to the other group, there was suspicion of anything that appeared to be 'talking down' and two students described Makaton and cartoon-decorated versions which they were shown as 'babyish'. One student in this group who was studying A-levels, said he actually preferred a formal presentation; a chatty, informal one made him feel he was not receiving the full content. He was also suspicious of too glossy a format and said he would prefer the money to be spent directly on more resources for disabled students.

Title

Some of the students did not feel strongly either way about whether the statement was called *Disability statement* or not. However, certain individuals in each group did react quite strongly against the use of the word 'disability'. Individual students who were deaf or who had some degree of learning difficulty in both groups said that they did not see themselves as having a disability and so did not think that the statement referred to them. They preferred the use of the word 'support' in the statement title.

Summary

The range of views expressed by students indicates the difficulty of producing a document suitable for such a wide and varied audience. The main conclusions are that:

- The disability statement should be presented in clear and unambiguous language.
- The style of the statement should match other documentation produced for students.
- A single format is unlikely to be suitable for all prospective students.
- It is essential to consult with a range of students in your organisation in order to be responsive.

Staff focus groups

Development and review of statement

In both the colleges visited, the writing of the disability statement was overseen by a group representing different areas of the college. Both colleges also made use of FEDA/Skill guidance documents. One college said there was some tension when drafting the document. In some cases, senior managers wanted to overstate the college's capacity to accommodate disabled students (e.g. 'We've got all these lifts; surely we are completely accessible?') while practitioners have to stress that this does not mean that the college is accessible to all students and the issue is more complex.

Internal dissemination

In both cases the statement went to the governing body to be ratified. However, beyond this there was a concern that few staff know about the statement outside those directly involved with learning support. In one case it did go into the induction pack for all new staff but there was no check on whether it was actually read. In the most effective practice reported, the disability statement was used as a resource when briefing new staff to provide information about the facilities and support available.

Although technically available to all students, the colleges tended to wait for students to ask for the statement but they seldom requested it. However, both colleges did have other information in the form of advice leaflets which did go out to all students in their induction packs. As a result of discussion, staff at both colleges said they would consider different ways of making the disability statement available to current students, either by giving it out directly or by advertising it on their existing leaflets.

External dissemination – to prospective students and other organisations

In one instance a copy of the statement was regularly sent out to the LEA, social services and the careers service, but there was no assurance that it got passed on to the relevant practitioners. One college sent copies to special schools but not, as yet, to special educational needs coordinators in mainstream schools.

Both colleges saw dissemination as an area to be improved. They felt that they did want all prospective students to have the chance to access the statement. Although both of them had individual leaflets one college in particular felt that these were very course specific and did not enable the student to gain the whole picture of the college's support for disabled students. However, they were also aware of the danger of swamping students with yet more written information which may be difficult for them to read. As most students are referred from other organisations they tended to rely on them to disseminate information, but were aware that these organisations had not themselves always got the fuller picture as described in the disability statement.

Current impact of statement

In both colleges it was felt that, as yet, the statement itself had had little direct impact on whether or not a disabled student chose to attend a particular college. However, certainly in one college, there was a feeling that this would begin to change.

In both cases staff were very positive about the process of developing and reviewing the statement in other areas. They felt that it brought staff together from a range of different areas to put together a composite picture of the situation. Moreover, they spoke very positively about how important it was that the statement had to be ratified by the governing body. It was felt that this had helped immensely in making senior managers and governors take the issue of disability seriously and in raising awareness of what was going on in their own institution.

Recommendations for improvement of the style and accessibility of the statement

You may wish to consider:

- Disability statements have to be suitable for a wide and varied audience and one style will not suit all
- Statements may need to be produced in different formats
- Formats need to match the requirements of the different students
- How statements may be presented in clear, unambiguous and welcoming language
- How to ensure that statements are not patronising to prospective students
- How the style of the statement will match other college documentation
- An alternative title to *Disability statement*
- How you will consult with a range of students to ensure that the statement is responsive
- If illustrations are used, this must be done with great care
- To be accessible, statements should be clearly printed i.e. minimum size 12-point in a clear typeface.

Recommendations for improving the dissemination of disability statements

- The disability statement can only fulfil its purpose if it is effectively disseminated.
- Statements need to be sent to all relevant external organisations e.g. schools (mainstream and special) careers, social services, voluntary organisations, etc. along with information as to how the statements may be used.
- Consider how all college staff can be made aware of the statement and its contents, e.g. during induction for new staff.
- Ensure that all prospective disabled students receive a copy, e.g. by checking at application, at interview and when the learning support agreement is signed.
- Ensure that the disability statement and how and where to obtain it is mentioned in a range of other college documents, e.g. prospectus, leaflets describing support, student handbook, etc.
- Consider how you can obtain feedback from students about the most effective forms of dissemination.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The Education (Disability Statements for Further Education Institutions) Regulations 1996

Guidance for colleges in the FE sector in England

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1996 No. 1664

EDUCATION, ENGLAND AND WALES

The Education (Disability Statements for Further Education Institutions) Regulations 1996

Made - - - - -	*24th June 1996*
Laid before Parliament	*3rd July 1996*
Coming into force - -	*31st July 1996*

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment, as respects England, and the Secretary of State for Wales, as respects Wales in exercise of the powers conferred by section 5(7A) and (7B) and 89(4) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992(a), hereby make the following Regulations:

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Education (Disability Statements for Further Education Institutions) Regulations 1996 and shall come into force on 31st July 1996.

Information to be contained in disability statements

2. Information contained in a disability statement about the provision of facilities for education made by the institution in respect of disabled persons shall cover the following matters—

(a) the policies of the institution relating to the provision of facilities for education;

(b) the names of a member or members of the staff with special responsibility for disabled persons;

(c) admission arrangements;

(d) educational facilities and support including—

(i) academic and curriculum support;

(ii) relevant staff expertise;

(iii) technology and equipment available;

(e) arrangements for handling complaints and (where applicable) appeals in respect of any of the matters mentioned in paragraphs (c) and(d) above or (f) to (h) below;

(f) additional support or special arrangements during examinations and assessments;

(g) facilities and support associated with the matters mentioned in sub-paragraph (d) above including counselling and welfare arrangements;

(h) physical access to educational and other facilities;

(a) 1992 c. 13; Sections 5(7A) and (7B) were inserted by section 30 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 c. 50.

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Intervals at which disability statements must be published

3.—(1) The interval between the first occasion on which a condition requiring the governing body to publish a disability statement is imposed ("the condition date") and the date of publication shall be such that—

(a) where the condition date is on or before 1st August 1996, the first disability statement is published by 1st December after the condition date, and

(b) in any other case, the first disability statement is published by 1st October in the financial year following that in which the condition date fell.

(2) The interval between the publication of subsequent disability statements shall be such that each statement is published by 1st October in the year following the year in which the previous statement was required to be published.

(3) In this regulation "financial year" means the period of twelve months ending with 31st March in any year.

Henley,
Minister of State,
21st June 1996 Department for Education and Employment

William Hague
24th June 1996 Secretary of State for Wales

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

Section 5(7A) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 provides that financial support by a further education funding council to the governing body of an institution within the further education sector must be subject to a condition requiring the institution to publish disability statements at prescribed intervals. A disability statement is a statement containing information of a prescribed description about the provision of facilities for education made by the institution in respect of disabled persons.

These regulations prescribe the information which must be contained in a disability statement (regulation 2) and the intervals at which such statements should be published (regulation 3).

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Framework for evaluation

Evaluation of FE College Disability Statements

Framework for analysis of FE College disability statements

PLEASE ENTER THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE :

PLEASE ENTER THE NUMBER OF THE COLLEGE : ☐☐☐

OVERALL POLICY

Q1 Is there a willingness to respond flexibly to the individual needs of prospective students?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q2 Are there clear and explicit details about how to contact the named person of staff?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Q3 Are there any specific arrangements for applicants with disabilities including assessment of needs?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q4 Is there availability of support during admissions?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q5 Are there any details of pre-entry guidance and assessment prior to enrolment?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q6 Are there any details of sources of advice at application stage?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q7 Are there any details of what the application process will entail?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q8 Are there details of early assessment procedures for students who may need to be placed in the independent sector?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

Appendix 2 continued

EDUCATION FACILITIES AND SUPPORT

Q9 Is there curriculum support available?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q10 Is there equipment and technological support available?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q11 Is there staff expertise including any specialisms available?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q12 Please indicate any other educational support available:

	Yes	No	Not mentioned
interpreters/communicators	☐	☐	☐
readers	☐	☐	☐
large print notes	☐	☐	☐
classroom assistants	☐	☐	☐
student support assistants	☐	☐	☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

Q13 Are there any special arrangements in place to assist students with disabilities in accessing the appeals process?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q14 Is there a link with other documents which contain details of complaints procedures?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q15 Are there grounds on which students may complain about the disability statement?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

Q16 Are there any arrangements related to internal exams and to those operated by examining bodies?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐ Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

OTHER EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Q17 Please indicate the other educational support available:

	Yes	No	Not mentioned
personal care support	☐	☐	☐
medical support	☐	☐	☐
welfare and advice services including named contact	☐	☐	☐
links with external organisations	☐	☐	☐
careers guidance including named contact	☐	☐	☐
catering facilities for special diets	☐	☐	☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

PHYSICAL ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESS

Q18 Is the college's physical accommodation accessible to :

	Fully	Partially	Not at all	Not mentioned
Libraries?	☐	☐	☐	☐
learning support workshops?	☐	☐	☐	☐
other academic facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☐
catering facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☐
sport and leisure facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is there access to :				
ramps, hoists and lifts?	☐	☐	☐	☐
car parking arrangements?	☐	☐	☐	☐
toilet facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are there :

	Yes	No	Not mentioned
any site plans or maps?	☐	☐	☐
is there a willingness to relocate classes to accessible locations?	☐	☐	☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

GENERAL

Q19 Is there an emphasis placed that students should discuss their needs on an individual basis?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q20 Does the statement refer to other relevant college documentation?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q21 Is the statement available in any other alternative format (e.g. Braille)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q22 Does the statement include all aspects of education, including HE collaborative work where relevant?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Q23 Does the statement include proposed developments?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not mentioned ☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

Q24 Is the title 'Disability Statement'

Yes ☐ ☐ No

If 'No', please give title:

Q25 What is the length and size of the disability statement?

A4 ☐
A5 ☐
Other ☐

Number of pages ☐☐

Q26 What is the presentation style?

word processed ☐
printed ☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

Q27 How accessible is the language?

friendly, student centred (we, you) ☐
neutral ☐
policy oriented ☐

Comment ☐ *'Good Practice'* ☐

Q28 Are there any disclaimers?

Yes ☐ ☐ No

Interview schedules

Disability statements interview schedules

Questions for coordinators

1. How did you develop your first disability statement and how do you review your disability statement?
2. To whom /How do you distribute your disability statements to prospective students (primary audience) and their agents (secondary audience)?
   a. Is it effective in reaching students?
3. How do you disseminate information internally about the disability statement?
   a. How effective is the dissemination?
4. To what extent are staff:
   a. Aware of the existence of the statement?
   b. Familiar with the contents?
5. What feedback did you receive from students when developing/reviewing the statement?
6. Have you received any complaints about the disability statement?
7. To what extent do you think the statement has an impact on students' decisions to come to college?
8. Does the statement help students to make decisions?
9. The statement itself: what are your views on:
   a. Style of the statement?
   b. Language used?
   c. Format?
   d. Content?
   e. Order?
   f. Any other comments?

Questions for students

The disability statement is provided to help you to reach a decision about whether you want to come to college.

1. Did you see the disability statement before you came to college?
2. How and when did you receive it?
3. Did it help you to make a decision?
4. What other sources of information helped you decide?
5. What information do you need to help you decide?
6. How and when should you receive it?
7. Is the disability statement accurate?
8. What are your views on the:
   a. Style?
   b. Language?
   c. Format and alternative formats?
   d. Content?
   e. Order
9. Any other comments?

Colleges and authorities in England and Wales must make public what support is available for disabled students through the publication of disability statements. Although the DfEE has provided guidance on the content of disability statements, their style and format varies from college to college.

This book contains the results of an FEFC-funded project carried out by FEDA, in partnership with Skill, to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of disability statements. Chapter 1 looks at the content of the disability statements while Chapter 2 evaluates the statements in terms of style, format and accessibility. Examples of good practice are given in both chapters. The book also addresses issues of dissemination and suggests ways in which colleges can distribute disability statements to staff and students effectively.

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